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ABSTRACT

This study examines, by adaptation of the Likert-type scale, the attitudes of a random sample of Bayfield citizens toward a new national park comprising 20 of the Apostle Islands and 42,000 acres of Lake Superior shoreline in northern Wisconsin, and its possible impact on the community. With the use of correlation analysis and regression technique, the authors analyzed the total socioeconomic and political framework of citizen attitudes influenced by social-psychological factors, and specific factors such as age, education, and anticipated rise in income. Governmental orientation emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor. Attitude toward the park objectives and formal education also showed a significant relationship. Implications are drawn relating the findings of the study to involvement between federal agencies and local people in a planning situation. Especially significant to successful joint planning are the perceptions that residents have of social, economic, and political issues associated with community improvement. (Author/NL)

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SOME DETERMINANTS OF CITIZEN ATTITUDES TOWARD COMMUNITY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The federal government has established a new national park comprising 20 of the Apostle Islands and 42,000 acres of Lake Superior shoreline in northern Wisconsin. The gateway for this park is Bayfield, now an isolated, rural community of 1,000. This study examines by adaptation of the Likert-type scale the attitudes of a random sample of Bayfield citizens toward the park and its possible impact on the community.

With the use of correlation analysis and regression technique, the authors analyzed the total socioeconomic and political framework of citizen attitudes influenced by (1) social-psychological factors, and (2) specific factors such as age, education, and anticipated rise in income. Governmental orientation emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor. Attitude toward the park objectives and formal education also showed a significant relationship.

Implications are drawn relating the findings of the study to involvement between federal agencies and local people in a planning situation.

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INTRODUCTION

Social scientists have addressed themselves for many years to a study of the community, its characteristics, its problems, and its resources. The traditional emphasis has been centered on the generic problems that community development should be helping to solve. Various agency resources, programs, and social processes to bring about change have also been in the mainstream of traditional research and action efforts. However, the attitudes and aspirations of community residents for whom problem solving is intended has received surprisingly little attention recently. (7)

The purpose of this paper is to summarize one phase of a broader study[1] directed toward identifying and analyzing citizen attitudes of a small, isolated community toward plans for establishing a national

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park in the area and to enhance the natural and scenic beauty of the community most directly concerned. (4,9)

BACKGROUND

On September 29, 1970, the President of the United States signed into law the bill sponsoring the establishment of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. Twenty of the 22 Apostle Islands located in Lake Superior and 42,000 acres of shoreline in Bayfield and Ashland counties in the northernmost portion of Wisconsin constitute this new national park. This legislation climaxed many years of private debate, public hearings, feasibility studies, and political action at all levels of government. Many modifications were made in the original proposal to accommodate the Red Cliff and Red River bands of the Chippewa Indians, who objected to inclusion of their reservation lands, as well as private and public interests affected by this government action.

The officially stated objectives of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore park are:

1. Preservation of a splendid remnant of Greak Lakes shoreline for public use.
2. Enhancement of conditions of the Bad River and Red Cliff bands of Chippewa Indians.
3. Improvement in the local economy as a result of tourism expenditures and federal investment.

The aim of the park is predominantly economic. The project seeks to make efficient use of the natural resources of the area

so as to improve the economic stability of communities lying in the sphere of its influence.

Bayfield, a rural, isolated, economically-deprived community of about 1,000 population in Bayfield County, is expected to be the natural center and principal gateway for most all activities related to this national park. The Fine (3) report on the economic prospects for the area estimates that the influx of people to the vicinity will mean a nine-fold increase. The impact of having this many new people and activities in the community as well as the thousands who will pass through is understandably a matter of concern to Bayfield residents. Consequently, there is a dichotomy of opinion as to the advantages of the anticipated economic improvement and stability. Some feel these changes may conflict with the present community norms and values. Others argue that increased tourism is necessary to provide employment opportunities and an economic base for community improvements.

THE STUDY

The study of the attitudes of a random sample of Bayfield citizens toward the federal proposal to establish a national park in the area was conducted in October 1969. This study and the larger research project were conducted simultaneously using one questionnaire with the same population. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To investigate the attitudes of residents of Bayfield toward the proposed establishment of a national park in their vicinity.

2. To examine the extent to which the social and political perspectives of community residents influence their reactions to proposals for the park.
3. To determine whether public attitudes reflect the importance that community members personally attach to the stated purposes of the park.
4. To analyze the relationship between expressed attitudes toward the park and biographic factors such as age, education, community tenure, employment status, extra-community contact, and anticipated income rise.
5. To identify from the data and associated experiences in this project policy measures that might be useful in bringing about citizen understanding and acceptance of major programs affecting community development.

We attempted to identify the total socioeconomic and political framework within which the attitudes were formed by determining the citizens' perception of the significance and consequences of the establishment of the park. This perception could stem from the viewpoint of the individual or as a member of a group. In Bayfield, as is true of most small communities, there are two types of groups: one includes those residents whose work, recreation, social and religious involvements are limited almost entirely to the community (called "ingroups"); and those whose homes are in Bayfield but whose work, shopping, and social interests are primarily in other towns or resort areas such as Ashland, Washburn (the county seat), or on Madeline Island (called "outgroups"). The kinds of feelings these

groups have for each other and for nonmembers (tourists and summer residents from other states) enter into the opinions formed by the people of Bayfield.

On an individual basis, it was assumed that certain personal, social, and economic characteristics would be useful in explaining the responses a person will make to a proposal for major changes in his community.

To aid in designing the study and analyzing the data, we forumulated four hypotheses. They were related to individual perceptions of the role of the federal government in planning for the local community in relation to the establishment of a national park; of increased interaction with outsiders; of the importance of the objectives of the park; and to the influence that certain biographic factors have on individual attitudes. The hypotheses were stated as follows:

I. Governmental Orientation. Those citizens who view the role of the federal government in planning for the development of the local community as legitimate have more favorable attitudes toward the proposals for the park than those who deny the legitimacy of such a role.

II. Ingroup-Outgroup Consciousness. Community residents who desire to limit their social interaction with persons they perceive as outsiders have less favorable attitudes toward the proposals for the park than those who impose no such limit.

III. Perceived Personal Importance of Park Objectives. Members of the community who view the objectives of the park as being important to them personally hold more favorable attitudes toward its establishment than those who do not.

IV. Demographic Factors. (a) There is a positive relationship between certain personal characteristics of community residents (formal education, anticipated rise in income; extra-community contact) and their favorable attitudes toward the proposals. (b) There is a negative relationship between the characteristics of age and community tenure of residents and their favorable attitudes toward the establishment of the park.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The dependent variable of the study, attitude toward the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, was operationalized by a 10-item, 5-point Likert-type scale.

Independent variables were of two types. Three were social psychological factors: governmental orientation; ingroup-outgroup consciousness; and perceived personal importance of the park objectives. These variables described, respectively, citizen feelings toward the concept of centralized planning role of the federal government, social interaction with those perceived as outsiders to the community, and superordination of self-interest over community interest in relation to the park.

The Likert-type scale was used as the principal reference because of the relative simplicity of construction, and its

comparatively greater reliability and validity. Indexes were developed for the governmental orientation and ingroup-outgroup consciousness variables. Item analyses for each of these two indexes, based on the data of the study, yielded Hoyt reliability coefficients of .87 and .84 respectively.

The second type of independent variable was classified as structural in nature. Specific factors were age, formal education, community tenure, employment status, anticipated rise in income through increased tourism, and extra-community contacts.

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE APOSTLE ISLANDS NATIONAL LAKESHORE

The literature suggests that the cognition-perception notion (8,2,5,6) is important to an understanding of attitudes. Individuals perceive stimuli from the perspective of stable beliefs and values and respond with attitudes that are consistent with these tendencies.

Attitude scales are at best only moderately dependable in terms of ensuring "pure" measurement. Their present "acceptability" as tools of research does not infer that they are absolutely reliable as indicators of social-psychological states and behavior. Oppenheim (8) emphasizes this point as follows:

> "Their chief function (attitude scales) is to divide people into a number of rough groups with regard to a particular attitude. Such scales cannot by themselves be expected to provide us with subtle insights in an individual case. They are techniques for placing people on a continuum in relation to one another, in relative and not in absolute terms." (p. 12)

The most important considerations in developing this type of measuring instrument are reliability and validity. Based on the assumption that the items of the scale are discrete, reliability of the instrument that is administered on a single occasion is verified by applying the internal consistency criterion. The Hoyt reliability coefficient was used for this purpose. Its computation was the critical output from the Generalized Item Analysis Program (GITAP). The coefficient was .88 for the attitude scale used in the pretest. The coefficient increased to .92 when the final 10-item scale was submitted to the GITAP program.

The sequence of steps followed in the attempt to maximize the reliability and validity of the attitude index were as follows:

1. We developed a careful compilation of an original list of 36 items (attitude statements) which were assumed to have some relationship to attitude toward the park. Proposed legislation, representative statements made

at public hearings, and the objectives for establishing the park provided the information from which the attitude statements were drawn.

2. The list was submitted to a panel of 12 judges who each selected the 10 positive and 10 negative items which in his or her opinion were most useful in obtaining a measure of a respondent's attitude. Professors and graduate students in the social science departments of the University of Wisconsin College of Agricultural and Life Sciences served as judges.

3. A pretest was conducted of the 20 selected items by 15 Bayfield citizens. We selected representative individuals who were not to be included in the final sample.

4. An item analysis was made based on the pretest data. The analysis was intended to detect the discriminating power of an item in terms of its consistency in separating persons who were "high" from those who were "low" on the attitude continuum. Allowing for the inclusion of both positive and negative items, we retained for inclusion in the final index the 10 attitude statements that appeared to have the greatest potential for contributing to the reliability and validity of the scale.

SOURCE OF DATA

The data for this study were obtained through personal interviews using the pretested schedule with a randomly selected sample of 82 heads of households in Bayfield. Two graduate students, two professional interviewers from the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory, and the senior author (as research project leader) interviewed respondents in their homes. The average time required for each interview was 45 minutes.

The universe from which the sample was drawn consisted of 321 households in the municipality of Bayfield based on information provided by the postmaster and the most recent telephone directory. By using a Table of Random Numbers, 133 individuals were initially selected from which the final sample of 82 were available to be interviewed. The total sample was comprised of approximately an equal number of men and women.

According to the requirements of the 5-point item of the Likert-type scale, scores were assigned to attitudes toward the park as follows: a range of 5 to 1 on each positive item (strongly agree to strongly disagree), and of 1 to 5 for each negative item. The total score was an aggregate of the scores on each item and provided an index of the individual's attitude toward the national park. The highest possible score was 50 (extremely favorable) and the lowest 10 (extremely unfavorable).

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Correlation analysis was used to test the established hypotheses. Acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses was based on the correlation coefficient "r" with a significance level of .05. The stepwise (multiple) regression technique was applied in order to investigate the predictive ability of the independent variables. Variables that showed significant relationships to attitudes toward the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore are presented in Table 1.

In summary, the significant findings were:

1. Governmental orientation--The more the individual perceived the centralized planning role of the federal government as legitimate and desirable, the more favorable was his attitude toward the park. ($p < .001$)
2. Ingroup-Outgroup consciousness--The more inclined the respondent was toward social interaction with persons outside the Bayfield community, the more favorable was his attitude toward the park. ($p < .001$)
3. Perceived personal importance of park objectives--The greater the importance attached by the respondent to the declared objectives of the park, the more favorable was the attitude he held toward the plan. ($p = .001$)
4. Formal education--The higher the level of education attained by the individual, the more favorable was his general feeling toward this project. ($p = .017$)

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF PREDICTED AND ACTUAL RELATIONSHIPS OF STUDY VARIABLES

Variables	Predicted Relationship With Attitude	Actual Relationship With Attitude	Significance or Non-Significance
Governmental Orientation	Higher the scale score, the more favorable the attitude	As predicted	Significant
Ingroup-Outgroup Consciousness	Higher the scale score, the more favorable the attitude	As predicted	Significant
Perceived Personal Important of Park Objectives	Higher the score, the more favorable the attitude	As predicted	Significant
Formal Education	Positive	Positive	Significant
Anticipated Income Rise	Positive	Positive	Not significant
Extra-community Contact	Positive	Positive	Not significant
Age	Negative	Negative	Not significant
Community Tenure	Negative	Negative	Not significant
Employment Status			
Employed	No direction specified	*	Not significant
Retired	No direction specified		
Housewife	No direction specified		

* Summarized interpretation relating to this variable is: Retired persons were more favorable toward the proposed park than employed persons, who in turn were more favorable than housewives.

Age, community tenure, employment status, extra-community contact, and anticipated rise in income from increased tourism and recreation opportunities were not significantly related to attitude toward the park.

When the stepwise procedure was applied, governmental orientation emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor, both in cluster (social psychological variables taken together) and aggregate relationship of independent variables to attitudes. This factor explained more than 50 percent of the observed variance in attitudes when the effect of all independent variables was simultaneously assessed.

Citizen responses showed that, in general, the attitude in Bayfield toward the park was more negative than positive. However, a sizeable number of residents were favorably disposed toward the plan. A large number of people were undecided as to whether they should adopt a pro or anti-park position. Individuals with extreme attitudes (positive or negative) were very few.

Three classes of people tended to have a slightly more favorable attitude toward this new development (though there was no positive evidence of significant relationships between the characterizing variables and attitude toward the park): those with long continuous residence in the community; those making significant social contact outside Bayfield; and persons who expected to gain financially from the development of the park.

The data seemed to indicate that the general attitude in Bayfield was one of disagreement with the concept of the centralized role of

the federal government and the concomitant reduction of authority and involvement in socio-political decision-making at the local level.

According to the results obtained on the ingroup-outgroup consciousness scale, Bayfield residents had no particular preference for more extensive social interaction within their community as against having social contact with outsiders. However, since the data suggested considerable limitation on the amount of contact made with non-residents, it was concluded that some respondents gave an esoteric interpretation of an "outsider". In the minds of those residents there are outsiders who are "different" and those who are "similar". Ingroup-outgroup consciousness was a valuable concept in determining the source of attitudes toward the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

IMPLICATIONS

From this study several implications can be drawn that contribute to the literature in adult education. Those that are of special significance are problems associated with measuring citizen attitudes, the need for a better understanding of the planning process, and factors to consider in developing action-oriented programs directly related to community resource development.

The review of the body of theory and research pertaining to cognition and perception that result in attitude formation contributed to our knowledge of measuring how citizens perceive community issues. The types of attitude statements and scales

developed and used in this research project could, with some modification, be used in analyzing citizen perceptions toward similar community development programs.

Involvement is increasingly essential between the professionals of state and federal governmental agencies and local officers, key organization leaders, and representative citizens of a community in surveying existing resources and formulating plans to effect change at the local level. Especially significant to successful joint planning are the perceptions that residents have of social, economic, and political issues associated with community improvement. A basic question seems to be: how do members of a small rural and isolated community view the role of the democratic process in planned change? In the case of federal plans for change, the political component cannot be minimized. The evaluation of individual federal projects is made against a background of approval and disapproval of the role of a central government in the affairs of the local community. Centralization seems to connote the idea of authoritarian rule and regimentation. This image must be counteracted for the sake of a more widespread acceptance of recommendations when they are offered.

It is the responsibility of professional community resource planners and developers to keep local citizens fully informed of the issues being considered and alternative approaches to solving them. The people in small remote communities such as Bayfield must be reassured of the sensitivity of state and federal government

to local needs. This study has reemphasized the importance of government planning with people rather than for them.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Departments of Agricultural and Extension Education, Landscape Architecture and Rural Sociology, The University of Wisconsin, Madison, sponsored this research with funding provided by the Title I Higher Education Act of 1965 through the Wisconsin Area Planning and Development Title I Consortium.

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